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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Sixty-seventh year

Identical letters dated 16 August 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia dated 15 August 2012, regarding the decision of the occupation regime in Georgia's Tskhinvali region to destroy the remainders of the ethnically cleansed Georgian villages (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35 and as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Alexander **Lomaia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia regarding the decision of the occupation regime in Tskhinvali to destroy the remainders of the ethnically cleansed Georgian villages

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs directs the attention of the international community to the media reports concerning the statement of the leader of the occupation regime in Tskhinvali of the intention to tear down the villages to the north of Tskhinvali (among them Kurta, Kekhvi, Achabeti and Tamarasheni). These predominantly Georgian villages were ethnically cleansed, torched and partially destroyed during the August 2008 war with the Russian Federation by the South Ossetian militias under the protection and with the direct aid of the invading armed forces of the Russian Federation. This destruction has been documented by many international observers, including the fact-finding mission of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) in late 2008.

In his statement, the leader of the occupation regime, Mr. Leonid Tibilov, has ordered the obliteration of the remaining signs of habitation and the very memory of the villages, stating "These areas will not be used for habitation, there is no point in keeping their names; they will no longer exist as inhabited areas ... These houses are not destroyed yet, but we are planning to put these territories, where the ruins are, under a specific legal regime, so that there are no questions asked tomorrow or the day after. We are planning to cleanse these villages. These ruins don't look very good. We will plan to build some kind of enterprises there".

The statement is the latest in the chain of official declarations by the occupation regime during and after the 2008 war that contain direct admissions of intent to ethnically cleanse the region. On 15 August 2008, the ex-leader of the occupation regime, Eduard Kokoity, stated that militias "have levelled everything" in Georgian villages and are "not planning to allow returns". In December 2010 the occupation regime issued a decree that changed the legal status of property in the predominantly ethnic Georgian Akhalgori district, allowing for its appropriation.

Under international law, all responsibility for ethnic cleansing, as well as for acts that pursue an objective of making it irreversible, rests with the Russian Federation. The Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, together with Abkhazia, remain under Russia's illegal military occupation and are governed by the occupation regime.

The Ministry calls on the co-chairs of the Geneva international discussions and the international organizations involved in the Geneva international discussions to urgently raise this issue in their contacts with Moscow in order to seek prompt reversal of the decision.

Tbilisi, 15 August 2012